Putting Your Past in Its Place
Review and Application of Steve Viar’s Book

Trinity Presbyterian Church
3rd Quarter Sunday School
July 5 2015
The Man and the Book

- Dr. Steve Viars
- Senior Pastor, Faith Church

Steve has served as a pastor and biblical counselor for over twenty-five years at Faith Church and Faith Biblical Counseling Ministries in Lafayette, IN. He serves on several boards, including Vision of Hope, a faith-based residential treatment center for at-risk girls and the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. He is a frequent speaker at conferences, colleges, and seminaries in the United States and abroad. Steve serves as the Vice President of the Board of Directors for the Biblical Counseling Coalition. He and his wife, Kris, have three children: Bethany married to Rob, Karis married to Austin, Andrew, and one grandchild.
Why are We Here?

• Biblically study the significance of our past and its connection to who we are today
• Build a framework to address issues in our past and learn to help others do the same
• Answer the question:
  In terms of who I am and what I do today, is the past everything, nothing, or somewhere in between?
As the class proceeds, we will biblically assess and analyze our past in four “buckets”:

**Bottom Line Up Front**

- **Bucket #1**: The innocent past when you responded well
- **Bucket #2**: The innocent past when you responded poorly
- **Bucket #3**: The guilty past when you responded well
- **Bucket #4**: The guilty past when you responded poorly

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<tr>
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Chapter One Review

• This material is for people who are stuck:
  – Reoccuring worry, fear, anger, depression
  – Destructive relational habits we wish we could get rid of
  – Troubled by abuses of the past
  – Wallowing in guilt over past sins
  – Private failures that occur again and again
  – Failures of the heart: bitterness, jealousy, rage, revenge, hatred, lust, etc.

• The past can have a tremendous influence on all of the above
How Should We View the Past?

• The past is everything?
  – You learned to be codependent from your parent
  – You abuse today because you were abused
  – Your deep personal needs were not met
  – Your memories need to be healed

• The past is nothing?
  – Just do right
  – Suck it up, stop making excuses
  – Don’t play the victim
What Does the Bible Say?

• Our relational past has a powerful influence on who we are today

"‘You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."Dt 5:9-10

"“You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. “You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead."Dt 6:7-8

"“Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons. “For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and He will quickly destroy you."Dt 7:3-4 (c.f. 2 Cor 6:14-15)

"He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm."Pr 13:20

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."Eph 6:4
What Does the Bible Say?

• Because of the Gospel, our relational past is not deterministic of who we are today

"Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."1 Co 6:11

"Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."2 Co 5:17

• Our response ultimately comes from our heart, not our past

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."Mt 6:19-21

"What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?"Jas 4:1

"Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life."Pr 4:23
Is Thinking About the Past Biblical?

• What did Paul mean when he wrote:

"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus." Php 3:13-14

• Many verses stress the importance of how we view our past

Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Co 12:9b-10

"She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me." Ru 1:20

"Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. “May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.”" Ru 4:14-15

"Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”" Lk 19:8
How are we Defining the Past?

“The accumulation of events, choices, responses, habits, attitudes, desires, feelings, and beliefs that frame the patterns, interpretations, and routines of our lives today”

Paul, Naomi, Zaccheus, and Onesimus all processed their past in different ways that led to different conclusions
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Trinity Presbyterian Church
3rd Quarter Sunday School
Week 2
July 12 2015
## Schedule

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The Y Diagram: A Visual Look at Biblical Anthropology

Who sits on the throne of your heart?

Environment: Situations, Circumstances, Relationships

Response: What we do, say, feel, think, and decide in response to our environment

Worship: Our response to our environment is always powered by what we hold most dearly in our hearts

God’s Sovereign Purposes
Rom 8:28-29
Psa 139:16

God Glorified

Self Glorified

Flesh and Feeling Oriented
Gen 4:7

Spirit and Principle Oriented
Matt 6:33

Habits

Easy

Hard

Actions, Speech

Thinking, Decisions, Feelings

Outer man

Inner man

Pro 4:23
Matt 6:21
Deut 6:5

Pro 13:15
Gal 6:7-9
1 Cor 10:31, 2 Cor 5:9
God Glorified

Matt 11:28-30
Easy

Matt 6:33

Pro 15:19
Mark 7:14-23
James 1:14
James 4:1-3
Jer 17:5-9

Flesh and Feeling Oriented

1 Cor 10:31, 2 Cor 5:9
God Glorified

God’s Sovereign Purposes
Rom 8:28-29
Psa 139:16

Who sits on the throne of your heart?
You can know a man’s heart by his words

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit. “You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. “The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil. “But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment. “For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”"Mt 12:33-37
Heart Response Questions

• Why does this person tempt me to irritation and unkind words?
• Why do I feel fear in this situation and choose to withdraw rather than engage?
• When my schedule is messed up, why am I so ready to lash out at those that got in my way?
• What unbelief is reflected in my response?
• What is God doing in giving me these situations and how does he want me to change?
Rom 8:28-29

Situation = HEAT

Better life

Problem

Sinful Response

New Problem (or problem worsens)

Problem solved or lessened

Biblical Response

Etc.

Situation = HEAT

Hard Life

Biblical Response

Problem solved or lessened

Etc.

Rom 8:28-29
Week 1 Review

• The Bible affirms the past has a powerful influence on who we are today
  – Parents charged to raise children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord
  – Warnings against being unequally yoked
  – Be careful who your friends are
  – There can be a generational impact of sin

• Because of the Gospel, the past is not deterministic of who we are
  – Paul responded to his suffering by drawing closer to the Lord
  – Naomi initially represents a negative example by allowing bitterness to take root and grow
  – Zaccheus took stock of his past and immediately sought to make restitution

• Ultimately, people respond out of their heart
Chapter 2: Your Past Can be one of your Worst Enemies

• Unaddressed issues in the past can have a negative impact on today. These include:

• 1. Unanswered questions
  – Have you asked God?
  – Is it OK to ask God?
  – How should we ask God?

“Posing questions to God in the right way can actually be an act of reverence and worship because it demonstrates that you want to use the trial of your faith to grow in your understanding of Him.”

Viars, p33
Asking God Questions

• Examples in Scripture:

"How long, O Lord, will I call for help, And You will not hear? I cry out to You, “Violence!” Yet You do not save. Why do You make me see iniquity, And cause me to look on wickedness? Yes, destruction and violence are before me; Strife exists and contention arises. Therefore the law is ignored And justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous; Therefore justice comes out perverted."Hab 1:2-4

"Arouse Yourself, why do You sleep, O Lord? Awake, do not reject us forever. Why do You hide Your face And forget our affliction and our oppression? For our soul has sunk down into the dust; Our body cleaves to the earth. Rise up, be our help, And redeem us for the sake of Your lovingkindness."Ps 44:23-26
Unaddressed Issues (cont.)

• 2. Unaddressed hurts
  – Is it wrong to acknowledge pain/hurt/sorrow? NO!
    "Jesus wept." Jn 11:35
    "He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; "Is 53:3a
    "My face is flushed from weeping, And deep darkness is on my eyelids,"Job 16:16
When considering how to deal with unaddressed hurts, it is important to develop and practice *spiritual candor*:

“Courageously telling yourself the truth about life, in which I come face to face with the reality of external and internal suffering...I admit what is happening to me and feel what is going on inside of me”

Kellemen, *Soul Physicians*
Spiritual Candor in Scripture

"My tears have been my food day and night, While they say to me all day long, “Where is your God?” These things I remember and I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go along with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God, With the voice of joy and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival. Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why have you become disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him For the help of His presence." Ps 42:3-5
Unaddressed Issues (cont.)

• 3. Unsolved problems
  – Leaving relational problems unsolved opposes God’s design for the Body of Christ—keep short lists!
  "Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity." Eph 4:26-27

  – Bitterness is a common result if you do not
  "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;“ Heb 12:14-15

  – The catalyst can be something as small as an unkind word, or something as big as abuse
Unaddressed Issues (cont.)

- 4. Unwise choices
  - Unwise choices can have lasting effects
    - Broken families
    - Physical consequences
  - Starting down the wrong path can lead to habitual sin
    - This can become part of your spiritual DNA—literally “who you are”

  "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Co 6:9-10

  - If you don’t want to reap it, don’t sow it (Gal 6:7-8)

    "Passing through the street near her corner; And he takes the way to her house," Pr 7:8

    "Suddenly he follows her As an ox goes to the slaughter, Or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, Until an arrow pierces through his liver; As a bird hastens to the snare, So he does not know that it will cost him his life." Pr 7:22-23
Unaddressed Issues (cont.)

• 5. Unconfessed sin
  – Adam and Eve perfectly illustrate the blame game in the Garden Of Eden
    "The man said, “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.”" Ge 3:12
    "Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” And the woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”" Ge 3:13
  – This evil intent in our hearts plays out in myriad ways today
    • I had an affair because you were neglecting me
    • You made me angry (irritated, etc) and that is why I blew up
    • If only God gave me X then I would not be doing Y
Unaddressed Issues (cont.)

• 6. Unlearned lessons
  – Repeating same mistakes over and over
  – Biblically this is called *enslavement*; modern colloquial term is *addiction*

"Like a dog that returns to its vomit Is a fool who repeats his folly."Pr 26:11

"“Can the Ethiopian change his skin Or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good Who are accustomed to doing evil."Je 13:23
Putting Your Past in Its Place

Chapter 3 – The Past as Your Friend
Why are We Here?

• Biblically study the significance of our past and its connection to who we are today
• Build a framework to address issues in our past and learn to help others do the same
• Answer the question:
  In terms of who I am and what I do today, is the past everything, nothing, or somewhere in between?
Chapter 2 Review
When The Past is Your Enemy

• Unresolved issues in your past can plague your present and future. These include:

1. Unanswered questions (it’s OK to ask God)
2. Unaddressed hurts (develop spiritual candor)
3. Unsolved problems (keep short lists—Eph 4:26-27)
4. Unwise choices (can lead to habitual sin—Pr 7; Gal 6:7-8)
5. Unconfessed sin (will always degrade your spiritual and physical health—Ps 32:3-4)
6. Unlearned lessons (being stuck in habitual sin; very hard to break free—Pr 26:11, Jer 13:23)
Chap 3: The Past as Your Friend

“...ask yourself if you are allowing this silent companion (your past) to serve you the way God designed. Perhaps there are elements of your past that are like a good friendship waiting to be cultivated and explored.”

Viars, Putting the Past in its Place, p48
The Past Matters

• If you could erase past and its effects, would you?
• God could have made us noninprintable, but He did not
  – Realize how many times in Scripture we are admonished to remember – who He is, what He said, what He has done
  – Objective is not to focus on the past, but to focus on who we were, who God is, and what He has done
The Past Matters

• Scars are a part of you – represent not only the trauma, but the healing

• Healing not always accomplished correctly sometimes must reopen the wound to help it heal correctly

• Even positive healing can be painful
  – Physical Therapy

Internal scars are ever bit as real as external
Past – Collectively and Individually

• Collectively
  – David/Psalmist – reminiscing past deliverances gives faith and confidence in current trials
  – Messages from Job – transformation of past calamities to spiritual blessing

• Individually
  – Similarly God has been active in your life - faith is fortified for current trials by remembering past deliverances
  – Larger prospective – conform us to the image of His Son

Faith provides meaning and purpose to suffering in our lives
The Past Helps us Repent

• When it is time to repent
  – The deep theological themes of Paul’s epistle to Ephesus suggest the church had reached a high level of Christian maturity
  – But later Jesus admonished this same church
    "‘Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.'" Re 2:5
  – Likewise we are incredibly unskilled at repentance; reviewing our spiritual history can help us to turn around
  – When is the last time you asked for someone’s forgiveness?
The Past Helps Us Forgive

• When we need the ability to forgive
  – Holding grudges, allowing bitterness and animosity to grow ARE NOT ALLOWED IN GOD’S KINGDOM

• Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18)
  – Key to forgiving others is remembering when/what we have been forgiven
  – Key to forgiving others is gratitude for forgiveness we have been given

• Biggest obstacle to repentance, and forgiving others is our pride
The Past Helps Us Forgive

• Biblical forgiveness involves at least four promises:
  – A promise to not bring the matter up with the other person again
  – A promise to not bring the matter up with other people
  – A promise to not dwell on the matter ourselves in our thoughts and concerns
  – A promise to actively seek to restore relationship with the person
The Past Helps Us Overcome Our Pride

• Remembering our sinful past and present status as sinners helps us to slay the Pride dragon
  – Most of us are far better at remembering the sins of others than our own sin
  – Understanding the true nature of our redemption
    • Jesus does not love us because we are valuable. We are valuable because He loves us

• Applications
  – Parenting/Church leadership
  – Church (Are we a house of rejection or a haven of grace?)

**1 Cor 4:7** - For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?
Past Becoming Present

• Present living in the past victorious death/burial/resurrection of Christ
  – Rom 6
  – Eph 1

Scripture makes it clear that spiritual realities in our lives occurred in the past. Spiritual success comes from appropriating those past realities to the present.
Past as Friend

“Review the ways

1. God has blessed you.
2. Rejoice in past victories.
3. Marvel at the sweet times of forgiveness.
4. Be humbled by the times you have failed.
5. Do not let the painful aspects of the past hinder you from the good that can result from cultivating this friendship.”

Viars, 56-57
The Sustaining Gospel

Most of us have never really understood that Christianity is not a self help religion meant to enable moral people to become more moral. We don’t need a self help book; we need a Savior. We don’t need to get our collective act together; we need death and resurrection and the life-transforming truths of the gospel. And we don’t need them just once, at the beginning of our Christian life; we need them every moment of every day.

Fitzpatrick and Johnson, *Counsel from the Cross*
Book Recommendation

• *A Gospel Primer* by Milton Vincent
  – A helpful daily reflection on the Gospel that can be read through in 1-2 months

“The gospel encourages me to rest in my righteous standing with God, a standing which Christ Himself has accomplished and always maintains for me. I never have to do a moment’s labor to gain or maintain my justified status before God! Freed from the burden of such a task, I now can put my energies into enjoying God, pursuing holiness, and ministering God’s amazing grace to others.”
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Chapter 4:
You Can Learn to Put the Past in its Place
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Viars, 56-57
Case Study:  
“Not the John I Married”

• John grew up in a Christian home but as a young adult was enslaved to drugs, sex and alcohol. Upon the tragic death of a close friend in a drunk driving accident, John began to reevaluate his life realizing his sin and need for the Savior. He professed salvation and although it was difficult - his life changed accordingly. He still struggled with his desires for the things he was addicted to inwardly, but he suppressed his desire as much as possible.

• Met Jenny in college, married and settled into a solid Bible believing church after graduation and had a family. John was made a deacon and served faithfully for many years. He was a well respected man at the church and evidenced devotion to Christ and his family.

• At the age of 45, John experienced a severe stroke. The doctors anticipated a full recovery for John, but Jenny immediately noticed a difference in him. Initially he was irritable and angry, but when she brought him home, he worsened. He would have fits of anger and start cursing and throwing things against the wall. Jenny was baffled, never having known him to be this way before the stroke. She tried to patiently love him, but none of her efforts to appease him helped. His boss called Jenny and informed her that he was causing trouble at work. He also warned that if he did not get his life under control, they would have to let him go.

• Jenny tried to find a time to talk to John about this but he would not go straight home from work, but would get in around midnight every night, smelling of alcohol. Jenny soon discovered pornography on their computer. At this point she was desperate for help. This was not the John she married or the John from before the stroke. She didn’t understand how he could heal physically from the stroke, but turn into a completely different person. She convinces him to come to you for counsel.
Case Study: “Not the John I Married”

• How should we view John’s current sinful behavior?
  – Should we assign blame to the stroke...or John...or both?
  – What, if anything, does John’s past have to do with what is happening now?
Case Study:

“Not the John I Married”

• The case study is designed to help us think about the close connection between our physical and spiritual nature, especially in the brain
  – The brain is an organ, our spirit does not reside there; nevertheless, the brain is the physical mass in which critical aspects of our inner being manifest itself in thinking, decision making, and emotions
  – Brain dysfunction may create a special challenge for that person to walk in faith

• Brain injury/disorders include:
  – Strokes
  – Traumatic Brain Injury
  – Hereditary/Genetic disease
  – Developmental disorder
  – Bi-Polar Disorder Cat 1
  – Schizophrenia

A biblical framework still focuses on the spiritual, giving grace in light of the physical factors. The person who has these challenges still functions out of the heart and has moral capacity. If we say anything less, then we relegate them to the status of a victim.
Counseling Considerations

• Scripture teaches a *unified, yet dichotomous* (two-fold) nature of man
  – We are created to have a physical being and a spiritual being

Genesis 2:7
  7 Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

  – While our two natures are distinct, they are unified and one impacts the other—unconfessed sin is an example

Psalm 32:3-4
  3 When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away Through my groaning all day long.
  4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah.

  – A counselor should be informed about the physical being, but focus his/her efforts on the spiritual being
Counseling Considerations (cont.)

• Areas to explore with John include:
  – Encourage him to get adequate medical care
  – Learn as much as you can about his pre stroke Christian walk; build a bridge to post stroke life
    • Self vs. Gospel dependent effort?
    • Basis and motivation for repentance? (1 Cor 7:9-11)
  – Practically explore the heart issues that are now being manifested in his behavior; provide targeted Bible study and prayer to address
  – Enlist the body of Christ to come alongside John (and Jenny!) to help in prayer, accountability, and loving them
Chapter 4: Learn to Put the Past in its Place

- Your past is not one big lump
- We can organize and think biblically about how to deal with our past by considering two major themes:
  - In what occurred, were we innocent, or guilty?
  - Did our response please or displease God?
- Viars uses these two major considerations to build his four “Bucket” framework
## Organizing the Past

In what occurred, you were...

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<td><strong>Well</strong></td>
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**Bucket #1**
- The innocent past when you responded well

**Bucket #2**
- The innocent past when you responded poorly

**Bucket #3**
- The guilty past when you responded well

**Bucket #4**
- The guilty past when you responded poorly
Biblical Examples

Bucket One: The Innocent Past and a Right Response

• Joseph (Gen 37 – 50)
  – Persecuted by his brothers and sold into slavery
  – Sexually abused by his boss’ wife
  – Wrongfully imprisoned
  – Thankless colleagues
Biblical Examples

Bucket One: The Innocent Past and a Right Response

• How did Joseph respond?
  – Committed to live faithfully in his current circumstances
  – Did not focus on self-preservation; rather he focused on serving others
  – Entrusted himself to God’s sovereignty
  – Fostered a kind attitude towards his brothers
  – His response brought great honor and glory to God

“But Joseph said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive’” (Gen. 50:19-20)
Biblical Examples
Bucket Two: The Innocent Past and a Poor Response

• Naomi (Book of Ruth)
  – Journeyed to Moab with husband and two sons due to famine in Israel
  – After 10 years, both her husband and her two sons had died; she and her Moabite daughters in law were widows
Biblical Examples
Bucket Two: The Innocent Past and a Poor Response

• In contrast to Joseph, Naomi’s response did not honor God
  – Encouraged her daughters in law to return to their “gods” (Ruth 1:15)
  – Claimed the hand of the Lord was against her (Ruth 1:13)
  – The result was a bitter heart

"So they both went until they came to Bethlehem. And when they had come to Bethlehem, all the city was stirred because of them, and the women said, “Is this Naomi?” She said to them, “Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me. “I went out full, but the Lord has brought me back empty. Why do you call me Naomi, since the Lord has witnessed against me and the Almighty has afflicted me?”" Ru 1:19-21
Instead of ministering to others in her suffering, Ruth needed to be ministered to. And so she was:

"So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife, and he went in to her. And the Lord enabled her to conceive, and she gave birth to a son. Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed is the Lord who has not left you without a redeemer today, and may his name become famous in Israel. “May he also be to you a restorer of life and a sustainer of your old age; for your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is better to you than seven sons, has given birth to him.” Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her lap, and became his nurse. The neighbor women gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi!” So they named him Obed. He is the father of Jesse, the father of David." Ru 4:13-17
Biblical Examples
Bucket Three: The Guilty Past and a Right Response

• Peter’s denial of Christ

"But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly." Lk 22:60-62
Biblical Examples
Bucket Three: The Guilty Past and a Right Response

• Peter’s response after Christ’s crucifixion was one of rapid repentance and restoration
  – “the two were running together” to the tomb (John 20:4)
  – So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for work), and threw himself into the sea. (John 21:7).
  – The Lord graciously gave him the opportunity to express his love three times (same number of times he denied Him”

" So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs.”” Jn 21:15
David’s Sin with Bathsheba was compounded by a sinful response (2 Sam 11)

- Gave in to the temptation of what he saw
- Tried to arrange for Uriah to be with his wife
- Arranged for Uriah to be killed in battle
- Brought Bathsheba into his house and married her

“But the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of the Lord.” 2 Sa 11:27

David eventually repented, but not before greatly compounding the effects of his sin. Many commentators see his sin with Bathsheba as a major turning point in his kingdom.
Questions?

• Next week: Chapter 5
Putting Your Past in Its Place
Review and Application of Steve Viar’s Book

Chapter 5:
Bad Things Happen to Good People: Another Look
Trinity Presbyterian Church
3rd Quarter Sunday School
Aug 9 2015
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<td>Bucket 4: Honest self confrontation</td>
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On 1 Pet 3:7

"You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way..."
Book Recommendation

• *Trusting God: Even When Life Hurts* by Jerry Bridges

“Adversity is hard to endure and can even be harder to understand. If God were really in control, why would He allow the tragic auto accident or crucial job loss? How could He permit cancer in a loved one or the death of a child? Grappling with His concern for us we ask, “Why is God allowing this?” or “What have I done wrong?”

“In an effort to strengthen his own trust in God during a time of adversity, Jerry Bridges began a lengthy Bible study on the topic of God’s sovereignty. What he learned changed his life, and he now shares the fruit of that study with you in Trusting God.”
Review

• The past is everything?
  – We must give grace to those struggling with their past:
    “weep with those that weep” (Rom 12:15)
    “put on a heart of compassion” (Col 3:12)
  – There are at least three problems with making the past everything:
    • The past is almost exclusively viewed in negative ways
    • The possible ways a person has sinned in response to past mistreatment is seldom considered
    • Because of the Gospel, the past is never deterministic of who we are today
      "Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." (1 Co 6:11)

“God deliberately made us with the capacity to remember. Failing to benefit from this in all the ways God intended is to jettison a significant tool for spiritual growth and development.” Viars, 82.
Review

• The past is nothing?
  – This view focuses on the behavioral responsibilities of the Christian... “just buck up and do it.” It reverses the biblical progression of:
    • Gospel indicatives (who Christians are)...then (or thus)
    • Gospel imperatives (what Christians should do)
  – Behavioral approaches often run out of steam and do not produce long lasting change
    • Focus on self effort
    • Fail to address the heart
    • Fail to consider God’s purposes for suffering
Review

• One big lump?
  – Our past is not one big amorphous mass. God calls us to think clearly and precisely on life matters.
  – When we think about the past, Scripture asks us two major questions:
    • Are we talking about your *innocent past* (times when you were sinned against directly or suffered as the result of living in a sinful world) or your guilty past (times when you initiated the problem by your own wrong choices)?
    • How did you respond (i.e. well (righteously) or poorly (sinfully))?

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Is God Sovereign?
Is God’s Word Authoritative?

• Catalyst for book was his son Aaron’s condition of progeria (rapid aging)
• Kushner on first hearing the news: “what I mostly felt that day was a deep aching sense of unfairness. It didn’t make sense. I had been a good person. I had tried to do what was right in the sight of God. ...I was living a more religiously committed life than most people I knew, people who had large, healthy, families...If God existed, if He was minimally fair, let alone loving and forgiving, how could He do this to me?...
Bad Things Happening to Good People

• Kushner’s response asks three questions:
  – Is there always a direct cause effect relationship between the way people live and the circumstances they experience?
  – Does Scripture teach that godly living protects us from painful trials?
  – Should people that are suffering assume that God is allowing this because of some sin in their life?
Bad Things Happening to Good People

- Is there always a direct cause effect relationship between the way people live and the circumstances they experience?
- Does Scripture teach that godly living protects us from painful trials?
  - Proverbs
  - New Testament on suffering
    "For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,"Php 1:29
    "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,"2 Ti 1:8
    "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."2 Ti 2:3
    "Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."2 Ti 3:12
Bad Things Happening to Good People

• Should people that are suffering assume that God is allowing this because of some sin in their life?
  – Sometimes for discipline: Heb 12:4-11
  – We are all miserable sinners deserving of punishment: Luke 13:1-9
  – In suffering God has greater purposes for his glory but also for our good:
    "But when Jesus heard this, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”" Jn 11:4
    "“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive." Ge 50:20
Bad Things Happen to Good People

• Kushner on Job: three propositions:
  – God is all powerful and causes everything that happens in the world
  – God is just and fair, and stands for people getting what they deserve, so the good prosper and the wicked are punished
  – Job is a good person

• Kushner concludes the first proposition cannot be true

“I recognize His (God’s) limitations. He is limited in what He can do by laws of nature and by the evolution of human nature and human moral freedom. I no longer hold God responsible for illnesses, accidents, and natural disasters, because I realize that I
Biblical Reflections on Suffering

• Seek to completely trust God’s sovereignty in the affairs of your life.

• Seek to live faithfully in your current circumstances.

• Do not focus on self preservation; rather be focused on serving others.

• Reject a malevolent or vengeful attitude toward your enemies or attackers; rather seek to practice kindness and forgiveness.

• God has purposes for suffering that bring glory to Him that far transcend just your own life.

• God’s purposes for suffering also are for your own good.
Biblical Reflections on Suffering

• You may not be able to discern God’s purposes for your suffering, so you are called to persevere and wait on Him.

• Suffering draws you closer to Christ in identity and life purpose.

• As part of growing in Christ, suffering helps us to overcome sin, increase in righteousness, and show more concern and love for others.

• Worship is a positive response to suffering and part of the process God uses to change you.

• Suffering should lead to increased focus in prayer to align your will with God’s will.

• Embracing and maintaining relationships is a crucial element of healing from suffering.

• God cares about and ministers to the sufferer.
Next week

• Chapter 6
• Questions?